

*On two Unrecorded Sculptures in the Ananta Cave, Khandagiri.—By*

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During my visit to the cave-holding hills of Orissa, the sandstone outcrop of Udayagiri and Khandagiri, some twenty miles south of Cuttack, I had an opportunity of making a careful search through the various caves for objects of interest which might have escaped the scrutiny of previous visitors, and I was surprised to find there were still Art and Archæological treasures which had been unrevealed to Fergusson and his emissaries, to Mr. Locke and his troop of students, to Dr. Rājēndralāla Mitra and his men, and all the later visitors, official and otherwise, who had been to these hills.

My own mission was to bring away casts of Aṣṭaka inscriptions found among the caves, the Aira Rājā's inscription in the Hāthi Guphā, and such dedicatory tablets in Aṣṭaka character as were to be found in several of these caves, and which were mostly figured in Cunningham's *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*. I was also commissioned to photograph whatever of allied interest came in my way.

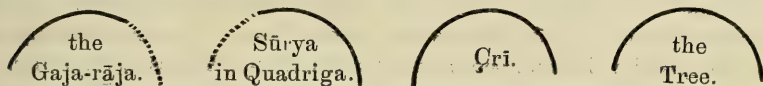
It occurred to me as very curious that no success had attended repeated visits to this cave in discovering the subjects represented on two of the four tympana between the arches over the lintels of the three doors and one window that opened into the inner sanctuary, seeing that more than half of each tympanum was there. They were sculptured but unintelligible. The grime of centuries and successive incrustations from the cells of the steel-blue hornet had sufficiently obscured them to make it hopeless for the casual observer to make anything of them.

It was now an easy matter to set workmen on the tympana to clear out the resinised wax with bamboo scoops and presently the sculptured surfaces were exposed. In the meantime I had devised a preparation which would facilitate the photographing of this intensely blackened stone. A ley of clay and soap, passed through a muslin and applied with a flat brush, much as a painter applies the 'drag,' shows up a low relief with great effect. I photographed the newly exposed sculpture after using the preparation.

The Ananta Cave temple had been explored with great care. Every inch of it had been measured and recorded by men who looked upon it as one of the most important caves in Orissa. Some effort, too, had been more recently made by Fergusson, who had visited Orissá nearly half a century ago, to discover the subject these tympana bore. At his request the then Commissioner of Orissa sent Mr. Phillips specially to examine this cave and report on these tympana—unsuccessfully evidently, for we find Fergusson at last driven to surmise, writing thus in his and Dr. Burgess' book on the caves of India.

“From our knowledge of the sculpture of the Bharat tope we may safely predicate that in addition to the TREE and the image of SRI the remaining Tympana were filled, one with the representation of a WHEEL, and the other of a DAGOBA. The last three being practically the three great objects of worship both here and at Sanchi.”

I am sorry my facts do not substantiate this surmise. The series of sculptures on the semicircular tympana begins at the left with the apotheosis of the four-tusked elephant, or Gaja-rāja, followed by Sūrya in a quadriga, the worship of Çri, and the tree, thus:—



We have here then for the first time the unique lotus-worship offered to the lordliest of elephants. The four-tusked one occupies the centre, huge but ungainly. The sculptor has set himself the task of representing in low relief every limb and feature of his great bulk *en face*. The left-hand corner of the tympanum bears a sun image and a well drawn female elephant, in profile, trailing a long lotus stalk, whose flower she is holding up to the Gāja-rāja. A lotus on the right of the elephant is held up similarly, but the female elephant is wanting.

In the Museum on a medallion, now on the centre table in the long southern gallery, there is a representation of a many-tusked elephant Bōdhisattva. Here a hunter sent by queen Culla Subhadrā (one of the two queens of the Chadanta elephant in her former life) treacherously wounds the elephant king from a pit. Being discovered by the six-tusked elephant, the hunter throws a yellow garment over himself, but to no purpose. The magnanimous one spares him and learns his mission,—to saw off his tusks and carry them to Culla Subhadrā. Being desired to proceed with his task, he does so with difficulty, whereon the king of elephants takes the saw in his trunk, completes the severance, and then dies.

The Bharat medallion represents the six-tusked elephant near the centre to the right of a banian tree, whence he has advanced to the right margin. In this second figure is seen the arrow which has wounded him in the navel, also the hunter plying his saw, but the portion of stone which should have borne the tusk is chipped off. A female elephant his queen Mahā Subhadrā, stands by him during the great crisis.

The birth story, which is admirably told in Dr. Anderson's catalogue, concludes with the narration of how queen Culla Subhadrā died of grief and misery for the cruel destruction of her former lord.

In the Orissan sculpture of the apotheosis of the elephant king he is represented with four tusks only and both his wives are in attendance.

The second tympanum figures Sūrya in his quadriga. The "seven bay steeds" or "seven lucid mares" give place to the Western idea of four horses drawing the Sun-chariot, whose front suggests the shield so frequently used as a Buddhist symbol in these caves.

He stands in the centre of his chariot attended by his two wives, Samjñā and Chāyā. An umbrella covers him. To his right is figured the Sun, and on his left we see the Moon in her first quarter. In the corner is Rāhu with his Thyrsus and Amṛta Vase. The supporting figure on the opposite side and the better portion of two horses are missing.

This subject occurs among the Bōdh Gayā sculptures. It is figured on one of the rail pillars now in the Mahant's house; and this gentleman kindly let me make a mould from it last January. I did not then know there was a cast in the Museum already, the gift of Dr. Mitra, from the same source.

Sūrya here stands in a large chariot, the front of which resembles the carapace of a tortoise. His attendant wives shoot ray-arrows from the chariot. An umbrella covers him, while halo-like rays emanate from his person. The quadriga here more closely resembles the Western model. The composition does not admit of accessories as the semicircular tympanum does.

*Note.*—This representation of Sūrya in a quadriga was also in vogue in Gandhāra and Udiana. A small group in the museum represents him thus; while two large capitals of Indo-Corinthian Columns found by me in the Swat valley show the remains of a very fine sculpture of Sūrya in his quadriga.

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